

## **Montana Early Childhood Advisory Council**

### **September 26 & 27, 2007**

**Members Present:** Cindy O'Dell, Shelly Meyer, Sandra Morris, Jeanette Hall, Janet Mann, Terry Minnow, Sheila Mevis, Dan McCarthy, Barbara Bacon, Barb Perzinski, Carrie Leu, Connie Sturgis, Del Bock, Shelly Fischer, Libby Hancock, Susan Carlson, Doris Running Crane, Darlene Miller, DeLauria Spotted Horse, Roy Kemp

**Staff:** Jamie Palagi, Chris Hettinger, Melody Olson, Lisa Murphy, Linda Kjorstad, Angi Rayfield, Renne't Sarbu

**Guests:** Ann Klaas, Karen Knoll-Moran, M Elaine Ross, Martha DeCrane, Erica Dana, Christy Hill-Larson, Pat Knoepke, Patti Russ, Val Mattfeldt, Anne Carpenter, Hank Hudson

**Agenda:** Cindy O'Dell, President, let everyone know that the agenda was not the agenda of ECSB but of the Council and that council members could request agenda items at any time.

**Housekeeping:** Made sure everyone had sufficient parking. Jamie said that if folks parked in parking garage where they have to pay, they can submit the costs on their travel reimbursement forms. Also, please sign in on sheet at door. If a person needs their appointment letter, nametag, MECAC binder, and/or state ID card, please mark when signing in. Chris went over the travel expense form. Current mileage rate is 48.5 cents. Travel time is from the time you leave your house to the time you get back to the house. Current meal reimbursement is \$5 for breakfast, \$6 for lunch, and \$12 for dinner. Cindy let everyone know that there is an evaluation form, handed out at present time, and requested that everyone fill it out and turn it in before leaving on Thursday the 27<sup>th</sup>.

Christy Hill-Larson introduced Erica Dana, who shared with the council her experience as a parent of a Head Start child. Erica remarked that Headstart has been very helpful, and would like to see them continue to receive funding to help those who need assistance in getting their children into Headstart. Erica stated that her child has learned important lessons, such as table manners, and stop-drop-roll technique. She thanked the teachers.

**ECSB updates:** Jamie announced that there is a new Childcare Manager starting November 13, Stacey Scarborough. There is another position open, which Anne Carpenter has recently vacated. Position has closed and applications have been received.

The focus and appropriate representatives for each committee are on posters that are attached to the wall. Please look to it for guidance when committee meetings commence on Thursday. Those who are guests can feel free to go to whichever committee they would like.

There was a meeting on Tuesday with State CCDF staff, Federal CCDF regional representatives, and Tribal CCDF administrators. A discussion occurred on background

checks and what tribes and/or the state is doing. Those who went to the meeting, if they could join in on the Program Policy Committee and share experiences regarding background checks that would be helpful.

There are vacancies. Bill Kennedy has resigned as county commissioner, along with some other vacant positions. ECSB is working with the Governor's office on appointment letters. By next meeting we should have most of our positions filled.

Chris Hettinger gave an update on budgets. There are some changes in how children are processed in CCUBS. The Tribal 4E foster care child care is being administered through CCUBS, although we do not pay for it. CCUBS is the most efficient means of processing childcare payments. Additionally, the working caretaker relative in the TANF program that has a childcare function with it is also processed through CCUBS. A child with a TANF only grant will be able to receive TANF money to support that child in a grandparents home and the grandparents have to work, this will help with childcare. The third change relates to CPS childcare payments. We used to pay it 6 months on the childcare side, and 6 months on the child and family services side with two different invoices. Now we have a signed MOU, all payments will be processed through CCUBS.

CCDF Activity – Chris Hettinger provided an overview of 2007 expenditures which ended June 30. For subsidy we targeted to get 70% of our total expenditures and we were near. The 2008-2009 spreadsheets indicate preliminary numbers; we have not tied them down yet, but are tentative for spending.

**Child Care Rules Update:** Jamie briefly presented the proposed rules and highlighted the rationale for the proposed changes. A lot of it is housekeeping. Two potential controversies relate to the market rate survey results and the 10 day closure notice provider effect. The results of the market rate survey were done in June. Rates went down in one area by one pay category type. In order to keep from any adverse affects, we kept at same rate until the rules are adopted. The intent of the market rate survey is to establish state rates at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of the current market. Questions from the council include: Did enough providers fill out the post card forms for the market rate survey? Do providers understand the reasoning behind the Market Rate survey? ECSB reported that we had approximately an 80% return rate.

Karen Knoll-Moran, Regional ACF, stated that Montana does go above and beyond what other states do. Requirement is for every two years for the surveys, Montana does every year. The rate survey shows what the economy is doing.

Another potential notice of controversy is the requirement of a facility to notify the CCR&R's when a child is absent. If providers fail to notify the CCR&R of the child's absence, they will forfeit the paid 10 day closure notice.

**Quality Maps:** Melody handed out quality map booklets for 2007. The only maps not included are the facility numbers and the caregiver numbers and ECP Registry numbers after October 1<sup>st</sup>. Melody explained how to read the maps. Maps are during federal

fiscal year, which runs from October 1, 2006 to September 30, 2007. ACTION ITEM: Tribal quality maps will be available at November meeting.

Jamie explained the benchmarks that every committee must go over.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** There were no public comments at this time.

**Federal Update:**

Karen Knoll-Moran provided a Federal Update. Funding is based on a formula, part of which relates to the number of children in an initial state that fall within the realm of what is funded for CCDF. Three main funding streams; mandatory, matching and discretionary fund. Handed out a chart that shows where Montana fits into it.

A new Error Rate Child Care Rule passed and will go into effect October 1, 2007.

**Dates for MECAC meetings were set for the year 2008.**

January 23 & 24, 2008

April 9 & 10, 2008

September 10 & 11, 2008

**Head Start/ State Collaboration:ECCS: School Readiness Report-**

Christy Hill-Larson, filled in for Mary Jane Standaert and passed out a handout written by Mary Jane. Christy explained about the 19 school readiness community teams and the school readiness task force. Christy also shared that the Collaboration office was active in assuring receipt of the ABCD grant related to Medicaid, *Assuring Better Child Development*. Other activities occurring in the collaboration office include the Economic Impact Study, and the Oral Health projects through the school readiness community teams.

**Infant/Toddler Ratios:**

Jamie talked about the Infant/Toddler issues that were brought up at the April meeting. Becky Fleming Siebenaler, Libby Hancock, Jamie Palagi, Linda Kjorstad and Ann Klaas got together and discussed the ratios and what had been discussed at the April meeting in addition to reviewing national ratio recommendations and ratios in like states. Becky, Linda and Jamie held a provider forum in Billings to discuss the concern about infant/toddler ratios. While many issues were shared and potential solutions too, it boils down to two main issues: 1) the need for infant/toddler care, and 2) the cost of providing infant/toddler care. ECSB and QAD intend to continue provider forums on this issue and will continue to update MECAC. The Council recommended that each committee take a look at this issue in relation to questions/concerns that QAD and ECSB take into account as the process continues.

**Quality Opportunities for Montana:** Jamie presented the concept of the council taking a comprehensive, detailed look at the current quality system in Montana for early childhood and addressing quality opportunities for a future comprehensive quality early childhood system. Jamie demonstrated using the games Candy Land and Life as

examples. Jamie explained that when it comes to easy movement through our quality system it is more like the game of Life. She would prefer the programs to be more like Candy Land where there would be easier accessibility with ease for providers, but with long term, sustainable outcomes for children and families, and the people who work with them that would truly measure and impact quality care. Of the programs in Montana now, Merit pay grows every year, and is one of the highest used programs every year, along with mini grants and renewals. The Star Quality program has remained stagnant, so it is not declining nor growing. If the council agrees, ECSB is prepared to bring Anne Mitchell, President of NAEYC, to the November meeting to guide the full council in a discussion on comprehensive quality systems for early childhood in Montana. The council agreed this would be a good opportunity. Jamie and Hank would like to see quality initiatives in next legislative budget as well, so this work will help to inform that agenda too.

**Indian Education for All Presentation** - Denise Juneau who is the director of Indian education, and Mandy Smoker Broadus provided a wonderful presentation on OPI's Indian Education for All program.

**Committee Reports/Recommendations:**

**Quality Committee:** Libby presented the Adult Learning Summary Report. If anybody wants a copy, contact Libby at the Early Childhood Project. An overview of grant awards was given, which included all merit pay, the apprenticeship program, mentoring grants, specialized training grants and Higher Ed grants. There was a Merit Pay issue where there were more applications than there was funding. All applications were prioritized and if went by original funding the priority 4 applicants would not be funded. The Quality committee recommended to council that \$27,950 leftover from Childcare Provider Grants to fund remainder of Merit pay. There was consensus that leftover funds were to be used to fund extra Merit Pay applicants. It was also noted that there were 8 proposals for provider grants but only 4 were funded as the other 4 were non-responsive, and there were 13 second/third year renewals. For the Mini Grants there were 98 proposals, so 21 proposals were awarded and 20 infant/toddler proposals were awarded, but there was the problem of not enough money.

For quality budgets, the obligation for 2008 needs to have sufficient amounts obligated.

The Infant/Toddler ratio definition issue was addressed by the quality committee.

A discussion was held regarding Touchpoints as an approach/model to build relationships between services and provider/families. The original training was and is done in Boston, where 3 tribes from Montana took the training. There are now 60 people in Montana who have gone through Touchpoints training. Cindy was asked to do a touchpoint presentation at the November MECAC meeting and she agreed.

**Program Policy:** Carrie Leu read the committee report. The committee tabled the following items from their agenda for lack of sufficient time: to look at 6 hours as a full

day, to look at monthly rate, to look at military families, closure notices, and full-time care. The program policy committee focused on Benchmark #3.

Carrie is to get a committee together to discuss and go over present policy and regulations and to discuss how to change, if at all, the background check procedures. There is a difference in how licensing does background checks and how the checks are done for LUP's. Also, to look at Tribal background checks and then the inconsistency in costs. There was a recommendation for a group to take a look at the procedures.

There was a letter from a provider in Poplar that was read about their concerns related to providing care. There were recommendations to Jamie to have provider talk with her local R&R with questions and see what technical assistance they can provide.

**Public Policy:** An overview of the committee report was given. Of importance to the full council, issues regarding full time kindergarten follow-up. MECAC has watched this issue carefully, and while the council has not taken a formal position, it is most concerned with the effects in the community of full time kindergarten. Committee members have heard from child care providers that they are seeing the effects of full time kindergarten in two ways: they have had slots open for child care as a result, and have filled those slots; and that the children do not have care for out of school time including no school days, afterschool, early release days. ACTION ITEM: The committee has identified the following groups as active stakeholders in the Full time kindergarten work and also as advocates for young children- Montana Head Start Association, School readiness Task Force, the School Board Association, MtAEYC, MtCCA, MtCCR&R, PTA, someone from OPI. The committee recommends that ECSB host a conference call with the stakeholders to address the effects of Full time kindergarten and to create a discussion around a tool kit or suggestions for communities in meeting the needs of the children beyond full time kindergarten. This will occur before the January 2008 meeting.

Regarding benchmark recommendations, the committee reviewed the current benchmarks and made the following recommendations:

Delete #1 *By the end of SFY 2007, increase the number of star providers by 10%.* , Keep #2 *By the end of SFY 07, increase by 10% the number of providers accredited by nationally recognized early childhood organizations,* Delete #3 *Increase by 2% the proportion of children served through the BB scholarship program as compared to the number of children in families with income under 150% of the FPL,* and Replace with #2 on the legislative benchmarks, Keep #4 *Increase by 10% the number of caregivers at a level 3 or higher on the practitioner registry,* undecided related to #5 *increase the number of caregivers enrolled and completing the Child Care Development Specialist Apprenticeship program by 10%.*

The committee addressed recommendations for QAD regarding the infant/toddler ratio discussion which included QAD researching the national recommendations from NAEYC, NAFCC, Early Head Start, etc.

